

THE VEGETABLE PLOT.

PLANTING POTATOES.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

One of the principal tasks in the vegetable garden at present is the planting of potatoes, for now is a favourable time to get in the early and second early kinds, followed by the main crop. A good site is one which has been deeply tilled and well manured in the preceding year: very little manure will then be needed. If the soil is heavy, mix with it as much wood-ash as can be obtained; burnt earth will also be valuable. Fresh manure is best put in the soil in the autumn or winter, and the manure that is used now should be well decayed. In addition to the animal manure, a good mixture of artificials will be about 3lb. of superphosphates of lime, and 1lb. each of sulphate of ammonia and sulphate of potash to every square rod (30½ square yards). This should be mixed not long before use and scattered along the furrow before putting in the potatoes.

One of the best ways of planting potatoes is to fork over the soil and to plant as there is ground enough for a row. If the soil is so light that a fork cannot be used, the soil should be lightly spaded. This presumes that the soil has been dug over previously, and the digging now should not be deep enough to disturb the manure which was added. Set the line and cut out a trench 6in. deep, beside it, drawing the soil towards the undug ground. Then set the potatoes upright against the straight wall of the trench, and cover them as the soil is being dug for the next row. Continue to plant each row as soil is dug, and then the soil will be left neat, and there will be no trampling on it after planting.

The distances for planting differ with the class of potato. For early varieties allow 2ft. between the rows and 1ft. between the sets in the row; for second-early kinds, 27in. between the rows and 1ft. between the sets; and for main crop potatoes, 30in. between the rows and 15in. between the sets. If sets averaging about two ounces in weight are used, the following quantities will be required: for earlies 16lb., for second earlies 14lb., and for late kinds 10lb. a square rod. It is best to use sets which have been sprouted and to reduce the number of growths to not more than two, taking care not to injure them in planting. Choose the sets which have the strongest sprouts for planting first and keep by themselves those with weak growths. If there has been any common scab, choose a fresh piece of ground, use no animal manure, get fresh seed sets, and dust the furrows at planting time with flowers of sulphur. A change of seed sets is more likely to be necessary if the soil is light, but a good way of getting a change is to buy some sets from the north and to save most of them for seed for next year.

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